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Soviets Had Access to 'Sensitive' Chancery Facilities

Classified Information Lost but No Codes Broken in Moscow, State Dept. Official Says

J By David B. Ottaway
J and Bill McAllister
Washington Post Staff Writers

The State Department's top official in charge of embassy security said yesterday that two Marine guards accused of espionage in Moscow allowed Soviet agents access to "very sensitive facilities" within the U.S. Embassy chancery, but he denied reports that U.S. communications codes were compromised.

Assistant Secretary of State Robert E. Lamb said in a television interview that the United States suffered "a serious loss of classified information" as a result of the chancery access given the Soviets by Sgt. Clayton J. Lonetree and Cpl. Arnold Bracy.

Lamb said he has not seen "any authoritative sources" to confirm reports that the Soviets had broken embassy communications codes.

One of his aides was more emphatic, saying it "has been established. They did not break our codes."

Another administration source said that the codes are changed daily and that code permutations are "in the billions," making it extremely difficult for the Soviets to break the system for any length of time.

Even so, the embassy in Moscow has stopped using normal communication channels and is carrying message traffic by hand to Frankfurt, West Germany, where it is relayed here.

Lamb, interviewed last night on

"The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," said the department continues to assume the "worst case" in dealing with what officials have widely acknowledged is one of the most serious security breaches at a U.S. embassy.

Briefing reporters yesterday, Col. C.J. Del Grosso, commanding officer of the Marine Security Guard Battalion at Quantico Marine Base, repeatedly ascribed to the State Department responsibility for enforcing regulations forbidding unofficial contacts between Marine guards and Soviet bloc nationals.

"State sets the rules; we live with them," said Del Grosso, administrative head of the 1,400-member Marine force charged with protecting classified material at 140 embassies and consular posts worldwide.

Del Grosso also said State Department personnel handle the six hours of the 254-hour course that is given all prospective guards on how to combat foreign intelligence agents.

Marines on embassy duty are under the operational authority of the post's regional security officer, who is a State Department official, Del Grosso said.

"I'm not finger-pointing," he said. "I'm just pointing out that it is a joint enterprise that has worked for 38 years."

Lawrence S. Eagleburger, former undersecretary of state for po-

litical affairs, said on the MacNeil/Lehrer program that the roles of the Moscow embassy's security and administrative officers should be examined.

He said they appear guilty of "very serious misconduct" and should be disciplined for the security breaches.

With proper supervision of the Marines, he said, "I don't think this type of thing had to happen."

Del Grosso generally sidestepped questions about the three Marines accused of misconduct in Moscow, saying the guard force otherwise has had great success.

Later, Brig. Gen. Walter Boomer, head of Marine Corps information and one of Del Grosso's predecessors at the battalion, said, "The truth of the matter is, I think we have a leadership problem on our part."

Boomer said his remarks should not be interpreted as indicating that the senior noncommissioned officer in charge of the Moscow detachment would be charged, but said more aggressive leadership, checking "24 hours a day" on the detachment, is necessary.

He said he doubts that the current reviews of the force will terminate use of Marine guards. "I am absolutely convinced that no one can do the job as well as we can," he said.